

Competencies in Projects and Organizations

– Example RWE Polska –

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The author works as CFO in RWE Polska, Warsaw. This subsidiary of RWE AG in Essen has around 1200 Employees, approximately 500 Mio Euro sales and delivers Electricity to 900.000 clients in Poland.

Projects are unique, and therefore “manpower” as a factor of production is more relevant than “assets”. The “assets” in mass production are leading to cost decrease and so to success. In projects we need to be flexible – creative – unique. This can be achieved only by excellent employees, and we in RWE Polska try to reach this aim by

- a) a conscious selection among job applicants;
- b) an intensive qualification of employees;
- c) a detailed and structured process to discover internal talents;
- d) a constant confrontation with feedback from all sides.

a) The Warsaw labour market is well developed. The instruments of recruiting are on an international level and the applicants are well educated. The latter has several reasons. The author, meanwhile having had worked for RWE in four countries, in each of them more than two years, so far has never experienced a nation with so huge an interest to work abroad than Poland. Almost every university graduate works or studies already abroad. This develops not only language skills but also intercultural understanding, and furthermore gives a broader view and a higher independency. Beside this, Warsaw is the most interesting working place for the best university graduates all over Poland, and only a few candidates recruited during the last few years in RWE Polska are really born in Warsaw itself. Poland is developing well and has best economical marks among the EU countries. The labour market “demand side” is influenced by high level international companies – so the result is a wage level higher than in other CEE markets and also a higher qualification.

Based on these circumstances RWE Polska carries out no international recruitment. The common procedure consists in assessments for higher positions or two interviews (pre-selection of HR department – final selection of responsible department) for specialists.

Lately we’ve started a cooperation with several technical universities in order to recruit future employees directly from these institutions and to be able to influence the curriculum with regard to the needs of an electricity-grid operator. In other areas (e. g. finance) there are enough specialized candidates on the market.

The best recruitment however is to keep good people. For this purpose we’ve got special retention programs for employees with high skills or confidential market-

knowledge. Beside this we use the usual instruments to keep people (e.g. educational support, internal and international job rotation).

b) Education is to be mentioned as the next key factor of successful performing employees – i. e. high project-performance. On the one hand, based on a yearly evaluation by the superior of every employee the HR-department creates individual education plans together with the respective employees. On the other hand and based on concrete fields of development particular seminars are recommended/ conducted. We use e-learning for standard education (safety at work for example), external and internal seminars concerning specific topics (time management, project management) and special tools (e. g. coaching, teambuilding).

We have trainees in the area of engineers and economists who, till now, - after a successful ending of the program –have always been taken over to positions in our company.

In addition to that we offer special events to interested employees or departments, for example language lessons, body-language training and expert knowledge. As above-mentioned we introduced job rotation programs (international and national) to provide our employees with an opportunity to get to know other departments, companies and positions so as to give them a broader view and better connections in the company. In special cases we support MBA-studies according to individual written agreements. Education and development plays a big role in our group and is regarded as the core of success.

c) Speaking of the third above-mentioned point concerning the method of how to discover internal talents there are two main ways to pursue this aim. One way is the opportunity we offer to young talents to take part in special one-year-trainings within the RWE group. There are internal programs in RWE Polska in Polish language and international RWE programs in English. The contents of these programs are similar – a combination of own-defined and own-motivated project work, including the presentation of the results to a management team. In addition to that there's a series of education sessions focussed on the subject of soft skills.

In these programs the crucial factor consists in the nomination of eligible candidates by the management. Those usually young employees are not able to nominate themselves or apply for the participation. It's solely the management who decides about the nomination of a candidate, and after being presented in the board, the chosen one gets the respective offer. The nomination and participation in those programs is therefore an informal "label" for talents and as such well perceived.

The second way of discovering talents is called "Discovery program" and is organized by RWE AG. Periodically every manager is evaluated by his superior in different areas of competences (RWE Model of Competencies). The competencies are distinguished in four areas:

- bringing forward the company;
- conducting changes;
- leading people;
- being an ideal/example for others.

According to these areas there are detailed skills evaluated for every manager. At the end of the evaluation and corresponding to the overall picture, the manager is allocated to different evaluation groups as e.g. “manager is on the right position” or “manager should have vertical step of career”. Together with a description of the areas regarded as possible prospective fields of work, all this information goes to a data pool which allows to find candidates company-wide for certain positions. Apart from managers already “at hand” (covered by 100% with this program) it is possible to “discover” and evaluate high potentials below the lowest management level and thereby to find appropriate candidates for free positions on all management levels.

d) RWE Polska uses the 360-Degree-Feedback. This Instrument is known as a valuable tool of evaluation of an employee or manager by her/his boss, peers and subordinates. The notable approach by and within RWE Polska is the fact that this instrument will be introduced on 01.01.2011 as obligatory for all our 1200 employees. We just call it an “umbrella” for the vast quantity of people without subordinates. There’s no connection to salary or salary increases but only to individual development plans and a feedback session with the respective superior in which the results are discussed. This instrument is supported by a special IT-tool to manage the high volume of data. The results are presented in a way that the peers- and subordinate-judges remain anonymous. The questions are based on the above mentioned model of competence.

Only if an employee gets a permanent feedback about her/his performance there is a chance for the necessary development during the employee’s whole stay in the company.

All the methods described above show the important fact that the success of an employee is not only based on expert knowledge but mainly on soft skills. Especially the ability to lead and to develop employees is a substantial one and unfortunately not recognised sufficiently as a must during the studies at university. Project work and project lead is a good area for ambitious employees to gain experience in the wide field of soft skills and thus to enable and recommend themselves for future higher tasks in the hierarchy.